

HEADS of AGREEMENT

Assented to by the

United Ministers

In and about **LONDON**:

Formerly called

PRESBYTERIAN AND CONGREGATIONAL.

Licensed and Entered according to Order.



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THE PREFACE to the READER.

ENdeavours for an Agreement among Christians will be grievous to none who desire the flourishing State of Christianity itself. The Success of these Attempts amongst us, must be ascribed to a Presence of God so signal, as not to be concealed; and seems a hopeful Pledge of further Blessings.

The favour of our Rulers in the present established Liberty, we most thankfully acknowledge; and to Them we are studious to approve our selves in the whole of this Affair. Therefore we Declare against intermeddling with the National Church-Form: Imposing these Terms of Agreement on others, is disclaimed: All pretence to Coercive Power, is as unsuitable to our Principles, as to our Circumstances: Excommunication it self in our respective Churches, being no other than a declaring such scandalous Members as are irreclaimable, to be incapable of Communion with us in things peculiar to Visible Believers: And in all, we expressly determine our purpose, to the maintaining of Harmony and Love among our selves, and preventing the inconveniencies, which humane weakness may expose to in our use of this Liberty.

The general concurrence of Minister and People in this City, and the great disposition thereto in other places, perswade us this happy Work is undertaken in a season designed for such Divine influences, as will overcome all impediments to Peace, and convince of that Agreement, which has been always amongst us in a good degree, tho neither to our selves nor others so evident, as hereby it is now acknowledged.

Need there any Arguments to recommend this Union? Is not this what we all have prayed for, and Providence by the directest indications hath been long calling and disposing us to? can either Zeal for God. or prudent regards to our selves remissly suggest it? seeing the Blessings thereof are so important, and when it's become in so many respects even absolutely necessary especially as it may conduce to the preservation of the Protestant Religion, and the Kingdoms Weal, a subserviency whereto, shall always govern

The Preface to the Reader.

our United Abilities, with the same disposition to a concurrence with all others who are duly concerned for those National Blessings,

As these considerations render this Agreement desirable, so they equally urge a watchful care against all attempts of Satan to disfigure it, or frustrate the good effects thereof, so manifestly destructive to his Kingdom. Therefore it's incumbent on us, to forbear condemning and disputing those different sentiments and practices we have expressly allowed for: To reduce all distinguishing Names, to that of United Brethren: To admit no uncharitable jealousies, or censorious speeches; much less any debates, whether Party seems most favoured by this Agreement: Such carnal regards are of small moment with us, who herein have used words less accurate, that neither side might in their various conceptions about lesser matters be contradicted, when in all substantials we are fully of one mind; and from this time hope more perfectly to rejoice in the Honour, Gifts, and Success of each other, as our common good.

That we as United, may contribute our utmost to the great concerns of our Redeemer, it's mutually resolved, we will assist each other with our Labours, and meet and consult, without the least shadow of separate or distinct Parties: Whence we joyfully expect great Improvements in Light and Love, through the more abundant supplies of the Spirit; being well assured we herein serve that Prince of Peace, of the increase of whose Government and Peace, there shall be no end.

This Agreement is already assented to by
above Fourscore Ministers, and the
Preface approved of.

HEADS

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Assented to by the
United Ministers, &c.

The following Heads of Agreement have been Resolved upon, by the United Ministers in and about London, formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational; not as a Measure for any National Constitution, but for the Preservation of Order in our Congregations, that cannot come up to the Common Rule by Law Established.

I. Of Churches and Church-Members.

1. **W**E Acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ to have, one Catholick Church, or Kingdom, comprehending all that are united to him, whether in Heaven or Earth. And do conceive the whole multitude of visible Believers, and their Infant-Seed (commonly called the Catholick Church) to belong to Christ's Spiritual Kingdom in this world: But for the notion of a Catholick Visible Church here, as it signifies its having been collected into any formed Society, under a visible humane Head on Earth, whether one Person singly, or many collectively, We, with the rest of the Protestants, unanimously disclaim it.

2. We agree, That particular Societies of visible Saints, who under Christ their Head, are stately joyned together for ordinary Communion with one another, in all the Ordinances of Christ, are particular Churches, and are to be owned by each other, as Instituted Churches of Christ, tho differing in apprehensions and practice in some lesser things.

3. That none shall be admitted as Members, in order to Communion in all the special Ordinances of the Gospel, but such persons as are knowing and sound in the fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Religion, without Scandal in their Lives; and to a Judgment regulated by the Word of God; are persons of

visible

visible Godliness and Honesty ; credibly professing cordial subjection to Jesus Christ.

4. A competent Number of such *visible Saints* (as before described) do become the capable Subjects of stated Communion in all the *special Ordinances of Christ*, upon their mutual declared consent and agreement, *to walk together therein according to Gospel Rule*. In which declaration, different degrees of *Explicitness*, shall no way hinder such Churches from owning each other, as *Instituted Churches*.

5. Tho' *Parochial Bounds* be not of *Divine Right*, yet for common Edification, the Members of a *particular Church* ought (as much as conveniently may be) to live near one another.

6. That each *particular Church* hath Right to chuse their own Officers; and being furnished with such as are *duly qualified* and *ordained* according to the Gospel-Rule, hath Authority from Christ for exercising *Government*, and of enjoying all the *Ordinances of Worship* within it self.

7. In the Administration of *Church Power*, it belongs to the *Pastors* and other *Elders* of every particular Church (if such there be) to *Rule & Govern* : and to the Brotherhood to *Consent*, according to the *Rule of the Gospel*.

8. That all Professors as before described, are bound in duty, as they have opportunity, to join themselves as *fixed Members* of some particular Church; their thus joining, being part of their professed subjection to the *Gospel of Christ*, and an instituted means of their Establishment and Edification; whereby they are under the *Pastoral Care*, and in case of *scandalous* or *offensive walking*, may be Authoritatively Admonished or Censured for their recovery, and for vindication of the *Truth*, and the *Church* professing it.

9. That a *visible Professor* thus joined to a *particular Church*, ought to continue stedfastly with the said Church; and not forsake the Ministry and Ordinances there dispensed, without an orderly seeking a recommendation unto another Church, which

Which ought to be given, when the case of the person apparently requires it.

II. *Of the Ministry.*

I. **W**E agree, That the *Ministerial Office* is instituted by Jesus Christ, for the Gathering, Guiding, Edifying, and Governing of his Church; and to continue to the end of the World.

2. They who are called to this *Office*, ought to be endued with *competent Learning*, and *Ministerial Gifts*, as also with the Grace of God, sound in Judgment, not Novices in the Faith and Knowledge of the Gospel; without scandal, of holy Conversation, and such as *devote* themselves to the Work and Service thereof.

3. That ordinarily none shall be Ordained to the Work of this Ministry, but such as are *called* and *chosen* thereunto by a particular Church.

4. That in so great and weighty a matter, as the calling and chusing a *Pastor*, we judge it ordinarily requisite, That every such Church consult and advise with the *Pastors* of Neighbouring Congregations.

5. That after such *Advice*, the Person consulted about, being chosen by the Brotherhood of that particular Church, over which he is to be set, and he accepting, be duly ordained, and set apart to his Office over them; wherein 'tis ordinarily requisite, That the *Pastors* of Neighbouring Congregations concur with the *Preaching-Elder*, or *Elders*, if such there be.

6. That whereas such *Ordination* is only intended for such as never before had been ordained to the *Ministerial Office*; If any judge, that in the case also of the removal of one formerly *Ordained* to a new Station, or *Pastoral Charge*, there ought to be a like Solemn recommending him and his Labours to the Grace and Blessing of God; no different Sentiments or Practice hereon, shall be any occasion of Contention or Breach of Communion among us.

7. It is expedient, that they who enter on the work of *Preaching the Gospel*, be not only qualified for Communion of Saints; but also that, except in *cases extraordinary*, they give proof of their *Gifts and fitness* for the *said work*, unto the *Pastors* of Churches of *known abilities*, to discern and judge of their *qualifications*; That they may be sent forth with *Solemn Approbation* and *Prayer*; which we judge needful, that no doubt may remain concerning their being Called to the work; and for preventing (as much as in us lieth) *Ignorant and rash Intruders*.

III. Of Censures.

I. **A**S it cannot be avoided, but that in the *pure Churches* on Earth, there will sometimes *Offences* and *Scandals* arise, by reason of *Hypocrisie* and *prevailing corruption*; so Christ hath made it the Duty of every Church, to reform it self by *Spiritual Remedies*, appointed by him to be applied in all such cases; viz. *Admonition*, and *Excommunications*.

2. *Admonition*, being the rebuking of an *Offending Member*, in order to conviction, is in case of *private offences* to be performed, according to the Rule in *Mat. 18 v. 15, 16, 17*. And in case of *Publick offences*, openly before the Church, as the *Honour of the Gospel*, and *nature of the Scandal* shall require: And if either of the *Admonitions* take place for the recovery of the *fallen Person*, all further proceedings in a way of *censure*, are thereon to cease, and *satisfaction* to be declared accordingly.

3. When all due means are used, according to the Order of the Gospel, for the restoring an offending and scandalous Brother; and he notwithstanding remains *Impenitent*, the Censure of *Excommunication* is to be proceeded unto; Wherein the *Pastor* and other *Elders* (if there be such) are to lead, and go before the Church; and the *Brotherhood* to give their consent, in a way of obedience unto Christ, and unto the *Elders*, as over them in the Lord.

4. It may sometimes come to pass, that a Church-Member, not otherwise Scandalous, may sinfully withdraw, and divide himself from the Communion of the Church, to which he belongeth : In which case, when all due means for the reducing him, prove ineffectual, he having hereby cut himself off from that Church Communion ; the Church may justly esteem, and declare it self discharged of any further inspection over him.

IV. Of Communion of Churches.

WE Agree, that Particular Churches ought not to walk so distinct and separate from each other, as not to have care and tenderness towards one another. But their Pastors ought to have frequent meetings together, that by mutual Advice, Support, Encouragement, and Brotherly intercourse, they may strengthen the hearts and hands of each other, in the ways of the Lord.

2. That none of our particular Churches shall be subordinat to one another ; each being endued with equality of Power from Jesus Christ. And that none of the said particular Churches, their Officer, or Officers, shall exercise any Power, or have any Superiority over any other Church, or their Officers.

3. That known Members of particular Churches, constituted as aforesaid, may have occasional Communion with one another in the *Ordinances of the Gospel*, viz. the *Word, Prayer, Sacraments, Singing Psalms*, dispensed according to the mind of Christ : Unless that Church, with which they desire Communion, hath any just exception against them.

4. That we ought not to admit any one to be a Member of our respective Congregations, that hath joyned himself to another, without endeavours of mutual Satisfaction of the Congregations concerned.

5. That one Church ought not to blame the Proceedings of another, until it hath heard what that Church charged its Elders, or Messengers, can say in vindication of themselves, from any charge of Irregular or Injurious Proceedings.

6. That we are most willing and ready to give an account of our Church Proceedings to each other, when desired; for preventing or removing any offences that may arise among us. Likewise we shall be ready to give the right hand of fellowship, and walk together according to the Gospel-Rules of Communion of Churches.

V. Of Deacons and Ruling Elders.

WE agree, The Office of a Deacon is of Divine Appointment, and that it belongs to their Office to receive, lay out, and distribute the Churches Stock to its proper uses, by the direction of the Pastor, and the Brethren, if need be. And whereas divers are of opinion, That there is also the Office of Ruling Elders, who labour not in Word and Doctrine; and others think otherwise; We agree, That this difference make no breach among us.

VI. Of Occasional Meetings of Ministers, &c.

1. **W**E agree, That in order to concord, and in any other weighty and difficult cases, it is needful, and according to the mind of Christ, that the Ministers of several Churches be consulted and advised with about such Matters.

2. That such Meetings may consist of smaller or greater Numbers, as the Matter shall require.

3. That particular Churches, their respective Elders, and Members, ought to have a reverential regard to their judgement so given, and not dissent therefrom, without apparent grounds from the word of God.

VII. Of our Demeanour towards the Civil Magistrat.

1. **W**E do reckon ourselves obliged, continually to pray for God's Protection, Guidance, and Blessing upon the Rulers set over us.

2. That

2. That we ought to yield unto them, not only subjection in the Lord, but support, according to our station and abilities.

3. That if at any time it shall be their pleasant to call together any Number of us, or require any account of our Affairs, and the state of our Congregations, we shall most readily express all dutiful regard to them herein.

VIII. *Of a Confession of Faith.*

AS to what appertains to soundness of Judgment in matters of Faith, we esteem it sufficient, That a Church acknowledge the Scriptures to be the word of God, the perfect, and only Rule of Faith and Practice; and owne either the Doctrinal part of those, commonly called the Articles of the Church of *England*, or the Confession, or Catechisms, Shorter or Larger, compiled by the Assembly at *Westminster*, or the Confession agreed on at the *Savoy*, to be agreeable to the said Rule.

IX. *Of our Duty and Deportment towards them, that are not in Communion with us.*

1. **W**E judge it our duty to bear a Christian Respect to all Christians, according to their several Ranks and Stations, that are not of our Perswasion or Communion.

2. As for such as may be ignorant of the Principles of the Christian Religion, or of vicious conversation, we shall in our respective Places, as they give us opportunity, endeavour to explain to them, the Doctrine of Life and Salvation, and to our uttermost perswade them to be reconciled to God.

3. That such who appear to have the Essentiall Requisites to Church-Communion, we shall willingly receive them in the Lord, not troubling them with Disputes about lesser matters.

*As we Assent to the forementioned Heads of Agreement;
So we Unanimously Resolve as the Lord shall enable us, to
Practice, according to them.*

F I N I S. 